FROM THE BOOKSHELF #137 APRIL 20, 1976
ROGER COWELL

THE CHINA HANDS BY E.J. KAHN JR.

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES...FROM THE BOOKSHELF...IN WHICH WE REPORT ON BOOKS AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY, ROGER COWELL'S REPORT ON THE CHINA HANDS, BY E.J. KAHN, JR., ABOUT AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS WHO SERVED IN CHINA IN THE YEARS THE COMMUNISTS WERE TAKING POWER IN THAT HUGE COUNTRY. THE BOOK IS PUBLISHED BY THE VIKING PRESS. HERE IS BOOK EDITOR_____.

EDITOR: PERHAPS THE SUB-TITLE OF THE CHINA HANDS BEST DESCRIBES WHAT THIS BOOK IS ALL ABOUT. E.J. KAHN SUB-TITLED HIS BOOK "AMERICA'S FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS AND WHAT BEFELL THEM."

MISTER KAHN NOTES THAT A QUARTER-CENTURY AGO THE OFFICIAL REPORTING OF MANY YOUNG AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS IN CHINA WAS MADE PUBLIC. MANY CAREERS WERE RUINED BECAUSE THESE MEN, WHO REPORTED ONLY WHAT THEY SAW AS THE TRUTH, WERE CHARGED WITH "LOSING CHINA" TO THE COMMUNISTS. THESE OFFICERS REPORTED THAT THE COMMUNISTS AND THE KUO MIN TANG SEEMED MORE INTERESTED IN FIGHTING EACH OTHER FOR CONTROL OF CHINA THAN IN FIGHTING THE JAPANESE INVADERS. THEY REPORTED THAT THE COMMUNIST FORCES WERE THE MORE POWERFUL WHILE CHIANG KAI-SHEK'S FORCES WERE MORE CORRUPT. FOR THEIR REPORTING, TWO OF THE TOP CHINA EXPERTS -- JOHN STEWART SERVICE AND JOHN PATON DAVIES -- WERE DISMISSED FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT. ANOTHER,

EDITOR: (CONT'D) JOHN CARTER VINCENT, WAS FORCED TO RESIGN. ONE OFFICER, O. EDMUND CHUBB, WAS FORCED INTO EARLY RETIREMENT. THESE SO-CALLED "CHINA HANDS" AND OTHERS WERE CHARGED WITH "LOSING CHINA" EITHER THROUGH INCOMPETENCE OR DISLOYALTY. THE RESULT: FOR NEARLY A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY HAD TO BE DRAFTED ALMOST ENTIRELY WITHOUT THE ADVICE OF ANY REAL CHINA EXPERTS.

OF EDMUND CHUBB, ONE OF THE VICTIMS, MR. KAHN WRITES:

VOICE: "THIS MAN OF GENTLE DISPOSITION HAD BEEN BULLIED INTO RETIREMENT IN 1952, AND WAS TEACHING PART-TIME AT NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, BROOKLYN COLLEGE AND COLUMBIA IN 1960. LATER HE WOULD BECOME A RESEARCH ASSOCIATE FOR COLUMBIA'S EAST ASIAN INSTITUTE. UPON BEING FORCED TO LEAVE THE FOREIGN SERVICE AFTER SERVING NEARLY TWENTY-FOUR YEARS, CHUBB HAD GRACIOUSLY DECLARED: 'SHOULD MY KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE IN FUTURE CIRCUMSTANCES BE DEEMED POTENTIALLY USEFUL TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, I SHOULD OF COURSE BE GLAD TO BE OF SERVICE IN ANY WAY FEASIBLE.' NOBODY FROM THE DEPARTMENT EVER TOOK HIM UP ON THE OFFER."

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EDITOR: THIS DRAMA HAS HAD LATTER-DAY IMPACT. SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER PROBABLY HAD THE CHINA SITUATION IN MIND WHEN HE RECENTLY CLASHED WITH A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE INVESTIGATING AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE. THE COMMITTEE WANTED THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO TURN OVER A CONFIDENTIAL REPORT ON CYPRUS...TOGETHER WITH THE NAME OF ITS AUTHOR. SECRETARY KISSINGER OFFERED A SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE DOCUMENT BUT WITHOUT THE REPORTING OFFICER'S NAME. FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS, HE SEEMED TO

EDITOR: (CONT'D) BE SAYING, MUST BE FREE TO REPORT ON EVENTS AS THEY SEE THEM WITHOUT BEING HELD PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPMENTS. THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT E.J. KAHN'S THE CHINA HANDS IS ALL ABOUT.

THE AUTHOR LOOKS BRIEFLY AT THE LIFE AND WORK IN CHINA OF SEVERAL OF THE YOUNG FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS WHO BECAME COLLECTIVELY KNOWN AS THE CHINA HANDS. HE ALSO EXAMINES THEIR TREATMENT BY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES AND VARIOUS LOYALTY AND SECURITY BOARDS. IT IS NOT A PLEASANT STORY, BUT IT IS HIGHLY READABLE IN THE INFORMAL STYLE OF THE AUTHOR.

E.J. KAHN FREQUENTLY QUOTES FROM RECOGNIZED CHINA EXPERTS RATHER THAN MERELY STATING HIS OWN OPINIONS ON TREATMENT OF THE CHINA HANDS. HE RECALLS, FOR EXAMPLE, A LETTER SENT TO THEN SECRETARY OF STATE DEAN ACHESON BY HARVARD PROFESSOR JOHN FAIRBANK OF WHICH THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT:

VOICE: "THERE IS NO MORE LOYAL ACT THAN A STATEMENT TO ONE'S SUPERIORS OF TRUTHS WHICH ARE UNPLEASANT FOR THEM TO HEAR. BUT SINCE NO POLICY FOUNDED ON WISHFUL THINKING CAN BE A SAFE ONE, MISTER JOHN STEWART SERVICE DESERVES THE THANKS OF ALL PATRIOTIC AMERICAN CITIZENS FOR HIS COURAGE IN STATING THE TRUTH OF THE SITUATION IN CHINA AS HE SAW IT. THE SOUNDNESS OF HIS APPRAISAL OF THE CHINA SCENE HAS BEEN IN MY JUDGMENT AMPLY BORNE OUT BY THE RECORD OF HISTORY."

EDITOR: AT ANOTHER POINT THE AUTHOR QUOTES TELEVISION COMMENTATOR ERIC SEVAREID'S APPRAISAL OF ANOTHER OF THE CHINA HANDS, JOHN PATON DAVIES, WITH WHOM SEVAREID LIVED FOR A MONTH IN THE JUNGLE DURING WORLD WAR TWO. TOGETHER THEY MADE THE LONG MARCH THROUGH BURMA AFTER A PLANE CRASH NEAR THE CHINA BORDER.

SEVEREID SAID IN A BROADCAST:

VOICE: "WHEN WE EMERGED INTO INDIA, THERE WAS A MOVE IN THE AIR FORCE TO DECORATE OUR DIPLOMAT (DAVIES) FOR HIS OUTSTANDING PERSONAL CONDUCT. HE NEVER RECEIVED THE DECORATION. BUT NONE OF US IN THE STRANGE PARTY WOULD HAVE DISPUTED THE CHOICE. FOR I THOUGHT THEN, AS I THINK NOW, THAT IF EVER AGAIN I WERE IN DEEP TROUBLE, THE MAN I WOULD WANT TO BE WITH WOULD BE THIS PARTICULAR MAN. I HAVE KNOWN A GREAT NUMBER OF MEN AROUND THE WORLD, UNDER ALL MANNER OF CIRCUMSTANCES. I HAVE KNOWN NONE WHO SEEMED MORE THE WHOLE MAN; NONE MORE FINISHED A CIVILIZED PRODUCT, IN ALL THAT A MAN SHOULD BE--IN MODESTY, AND THOUGHTFULNESS, IN RESOURCEFULNESS AND STEADY STRENGTH OF CHARACTER."

EDITOR: ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE HISTORICAL PERIOD, OR IN THE WORK DONE ABROAD BY FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICERS, WILL FIND THE CHINA HANDS WORTHWHILE READING.

ANNCR: YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO A REVIEW BY ROGER COWELL OF THE CHINA HANDS BY E.J. KAHN JUNIOR, PUBLISHED BY THE VIKING PRESS. JOIN US NEXT WEEK AT THE SAME TIME FOR ANOTHER IN OUR PROGRAM SERIES...FROM THE BOOKSHELF.

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